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ABSTRACT

Differences between background characteristics and attitudes of participants and nonparticipants in campus demonstrations were studied. An anonymous questionnaire was administered to 5,671 University of Maryland, College Park, undergraduates during fall registration, 1970. Results show that 50 percent of the sample had participated in some campus demonstration during the past year and 50 percent had not. Compared to nonparticipants, participants tended to be upperclassmen, regard themselves as liberal or radical, and come from families with more income. Participants were also likely to feel that U.S. foreign policy, domestic crisis, and campus communications caused the campus disturbances rather than radicals or outside agitators. Participants also tended to be more against defense spending, selective service, and the war in Vietnam. Participants tended to feel that the National Guard intensified the violence on campus, that the President should not be supported in all circumstances, and that the university should disclose more about research and should not maintain non-academic student records. The implications of the results are discussed. Questionnaire results and statistical data are appended. (Author/SW)

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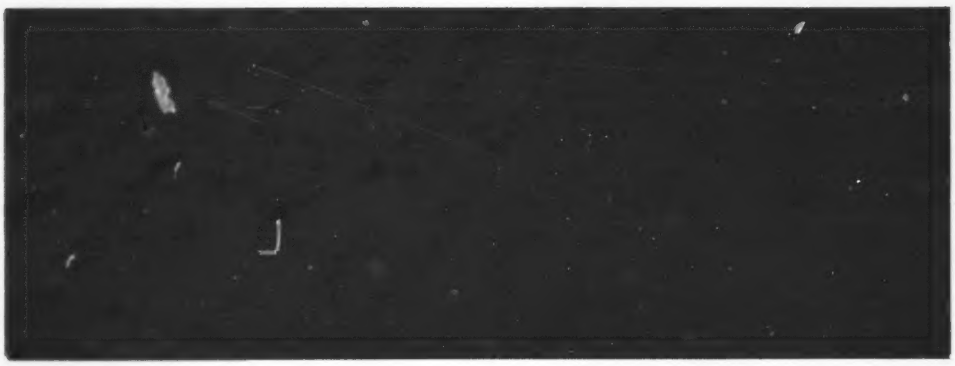

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DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS AND NON-PARTICIPANTS IN CAMPUS DEMONSTRATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

Ronald L. Kimball and William E. Sedlacek

Research Report # 2-71

Summary

Differences between background characteristics and attitudes of participants and nonparticipants in campus demonstrations were studied. An anonymous questionnaire was administered to 5,671 University of Maryland, College Park undergraduates during fall registration, 1970. Results showed that 50% of the sample had participated in some campus demonstration during the past year and 50% had not. Compared to nonparticipants, participants tended to be upperclassmen, regard themselves as liberal or radical, and come from families with more income. Participants were also likely to feel that U.S. foreign policy, domestic crisis and campus communications caused the campus disturbances rather than radicals or outside agitators.

Participants also tended to be more against defense spending, selective service and the war in Vietnam. Participators also tended to feel that the National Guard intensified the violence on campus, that the President should not be supported in all circumstances, and that the University should disclose more about research and should not maintain non-academic student records. The implications of the results are discussed.

The attention of the behavioral sciences has, of late, been turned in the direction of the social and political phenomenon taking place on our college campuses. The heightened social awareness and political activism appears to have come as a surprise to many (Sampson, 1970). The result has been literally hundreds of definitive studies seeking to answer questions about who, why, and how such a movement began. In time a certain clarity has come to the problem. For instance, a definite difference is now recognized between the "activist" and the "alienated" college student (Keniston, 1967). While the first attempts to change the conditions with which he is dissatisfied, the second merely "drops out." It is the former, the activist, who is becoming vocal on our campuses today (Keniston, 1967; Astin, 1968; Payer and Astin, 1969; Watts, et al., 1969; Sampson, 1970; Bay, 1970).

Certain findings about the activist student have also been fairly consensual. They seem generally to come from families in the upper-middle income bracket (Westby and Braungart, 1966; Flacks, 1967a; Astin, 1968); their parents are well-educated (Flacks, 1967a, 1967b; Watts and Whittaker, 1966; Astin, 1968) and they themselves seem somewhat more intelligent than the average for college students (Bay, 1970; Kerpelman, 1969; Gales, 1966; Westby and Epstein, 1969). Equally as widespread is the finding that student activists tend to come from liberal, democratic-type authority atmospheres in the home (Flacks, 1967a, 1967b; Keniston, 1968). This, then, is the type of person who engages in and motivates social/political activities on our nation's campuses.

Keniston (1967) has stated that protest is a function of four basic factors:

(1) Individuals suitably predisposed by personal background, values, and motivations.

(2) certain environmental settings;
(3) a positive attitude concerning the ultimate effectiveness of protest, and
(4) a historical or precipitating situation.

Given these factors, why is it that some are activist and take part in protest while others will not in the same instances? Are there some basic differences that make these two distinct groups? Are their attitudes on controversial social/political issues actually different?

This present study is the first step in an attempt to answer these questions. Its purpose is to study two groups of students, defined by whether or not they took part in a campus demonstration during the 1969-70 academic year, as a function of a number of questions about their attitudes toward the events at the University of Maryland during May of 1970. During May of 1970, the College Park campus of the University of Maryland was hit by a series of disturbances which ranged from peaceful mass gatherings to violent confrontations with the police and the National Guard. It is predicted that those who admit to taking part in active demonstrations will also tend to be less satisfied with present policy, either campus or national. If this is true, it points to the hypothesis that the more strongly one feels on a certain issue, the more likely one is to take physical action.

Procedure

An anonymous questionnaire was administered to 5671 students during one day of fall registration, 1970 at the University of Maryland. The sample drawn should have been representative of all students registering. New freshmen not previously in attendance at the University were excluded from the sample.

The questionnaire contained 24 items, 20 of which were on a five point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." (See

Table 1). Those responding "other" to each item were dropped from analysis of that item. Subjects were grouped on the basis of their response to item 16 which read:

I participated in some way in a campus (any campus) demonstration last year. Yes No

Differences between those responding Yes and No to item 16 were tested, using t for the Likert items and χ^2 for the three categorical items.

Results and Discussion

A total of 2830 (50%) answered Yes (Participants) to question 16 and 2841 (50%) answered No (Non-participants). Tables 1 and 2 show that there were differences (.001 level) between participants and non-participants on all questionnaire items.

Since the samples employed were so large the reader is cautioned against overinterpreting the size of the differences. Compared to non-participants, participants tended to be upperclassmen (item 2), regard themselves as liberal or radical (item 1), and come from families with more income (item 3 - participants median = $15,340; non-participants median = $13,601). Participants were also likely to feel that U.S. foreign policy (item 15a), domestic crisis and campus communications (15 b and d) caused the campus disturbances rather than radicals or outside agitators (15 e and f). Participants also tended to be more against defense spending (items 8 & 9), selective service (item 10) and the war in Vietnam (items 7 a ,b and c). Participants also tended to feel that the National Guard intensified the violence on campus (item 11), and that the University should disclose more about research (items 12 and 13) and should not maintain non-academic student records.

Many readers may by now be saying "So what's new?" The writers feel that such research has several important purposes. First it empirically verifies the expectations many of us have. We can begin to talk about facts rather than conjecture. That we are able to so clearly differentiate two groups of students is perhaps interesting by itself. Second, we may find some interesting results which were not so expected. For instance, the smallest difference found between participants and non-participants was that racial tension was a cause of the campus disturbances. These data may reflect the decreasing emphasis being placed on racism as a campus issue by white students (Collins and Sedlacek, 1971). Of course it may be that race had little to do with the campus riots of May, 1970. Another perhaps surprising finding was the number of students who reported participating in a demonstration at an institution generally thought of as nonactivist. The myth of only a handful of students being involved is surely considerably weakened.

Of course it is important to distinguish between demonstrations and riots. Whether American higher education will ever experience another year like 1969-70 is unknown but the record should show that the physical action taken by students was not the act of a few radicals but represented fully half of the campus of at least one University. Based on these data solutions such as expulsion of dissenters become bizarre.

Fruitful areas of future research include the analysis of the effects of demonstration and riots on participants and non-participants. Evidence from the Maryland campus indicates that demonstrations on clearly identified topics such as the war in Vietnam do tend to polarize participants and non-participants (Schmidt and Sedlacek, 1970). That is each group tends to be more sure

of the desirability of participation or not and is also more sure of their position on the war and related issues after the demonstration.

At the very least studies such as the current one should cause us all to pause and realize that we must have information and think clearly so that should another 1969-70 come upon us we can reach more optimal solutions than we have in the past.

Table 1.

Means, Standard Deviations and t-values on Likert items for Participants and Non-Participants

Item Number	Participants			Non-Participants			
	N	Mean*	S.D.	N	Mean*	S.D.	t-Value**
4. During the disruptions last spring, the presence of the National Guard intensified the violence.	2779	2.04	1.15	2703	2.90	1.21	-27.12
5. After the disruptions last spring, the presence of the National Guard made the campus safer.	2763	3.74	1.12	2702	2.85	1.11	29.49
6. Campus police should NOT routinely wear firearms on campus.	2794	1.90	1.19	2780	2.66	1.33	-22.49
7. Regarding the U.S. military involvement in S.E. Asia:							
a. We must have military victory	2736	4.25	1.08	2721	3.57	1.19	22.23
b. American combat personnel should be withdrawn at a rate not endangering the government of South Vietnam	2706	3.01	1.33	2739	2.43	1.14	17.22
c. Military aid and troops should be withdrawn now.	2757	2.25	1.34	2728	3.21	1.32	-26.58
8. National security increases with the deployment of new missiles.	2731	3.83	1.14	2722	3.25	1.11	19.25
9. Military and defense expenses prevent us from meeting domestic needs.	2782	1.76	0.95	2777	2.40	1.13	-22.95
10. Selective Service is a good way to maintain a standing army to protect the country.	2759	3.86	1.14	2772	3.12	1.16	24.04
11. We should support the President of our country in all circumstances.	2772	4.26	0.98	2760	3.46	1.21	27.24
12. The source of funds used for all University research should be made known to the University community.	2793	1.74	0.91	2792	2.25	1.02	-19.46
13. The University community should know the nature of all University research projects.	2790	1.95	1.05	2784	2.50	1.11	-18.97

Table 1. Continued

Means, Standard Deviations and t-values on Likert items for Participants and Non-Participants

Item Number	Participants			Non-Participants			
	N	Mean*	S.D.	N	Mean*	S.D.	t-values **
14. The University administration has neither the right nor the responsibility to accumulate non-academic records on students.	2780	1.97	1.11	2776	2.68	1.22	-22.55
15. The disturbances at Maryland last spring were caused by:							
a. Foreign policy in S.E. Asia	2787	1.80	0.85	2717	2.43	1.02	-24.95
b. Domestic and economic crisis	2778	2.42	1.06	2705	2.92	1.01	-17.70
c. Racial tension	2768	3.16	1.13	2708	3.28	1.02	-03.95
d. Student frustration with administrative communication	2785	1.80	0.90	2715	2.39	0.99	-23.34
e. Radicals	2764	2.60	1.15	2715	2.16	1.02	14.81
f. Outside agitators	2733	2.98	1.37	2681	2.35	1.07	18.13
g. Spring fever	2717	3.31	1.34	2685	3.09	1.24	06.12

* Scale ranges from 1= Strongly agree to 5=Strongly disagree

** a two tailed t of 3.29 is significant at .001

Table 2.

Frequencies and Percent Reponses to Categorical Items* for Participants and Non-Participants

Item	Participants Frequency	Participants Percent**	Non-Participants Frequency	Non-Participants Percent**
1. I generally consider myself a:				
Reactionary	58	2.04	29	1.02
Conservative	130	4.59	648	22.80
Moderate	755	26.67	1301	45.79
Liberal	1450	51.23	691	24.32
Radical	251	8.86	24	.84
Other	186	6.67	148	5.20
Total	2830	100.06	2841	99.97
2. My classification at the University is:				
Freshman	112	3.95	249	8.76
Sophomore	943	33.32	855	30.09
Junior	1049	37.06	1082	38.08
Senior	675	23.85	596	20.97
Other	51	1.80	58	2.04
Total	2830	99.98	2840	99.94
3. My family income (estimate of your family's yearly income) is:				
$4,000 or less	83	2.93	87	3.06
$4,001 to 6,000	96	3.39	127	4.47
$6,001 to 8,000	225	7.95	268	9.43
$8,001 to 10,000	347	12.26	433	15.24
$10,001 to 20,000	1013	35.79	1108	39.00
$20,001 to 30,000	539	19.04	410	14.43
Over $30,000	282	9.96	195	6.86
Unknown	195	6.89	173	6.08
Other	50	1.76	40	1.40
Total	2830	99.97	2841	99.97

* X^2 for items 1,2 and 3 significant beyond .001 (Participants vs Non-participants)

** Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding

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